

**LAW  
REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN**

**May 1, 1998**

**On freedom of conscience and religious organizations  
(new version)**

**Article 1. Purpose addressed by the present Law**

The present Law ensures rights of every person to freedom of conscience and religion, equality of rights of citizens irrespective of their attitude toward religion, as well as regulates a range of relationship connected with activity of religious organizations.

**Article 2. Legislation on freedom of conscience and religious organizations**

The legislation on freedom of conscience and religious organizations comprises the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, present Law and other legislative acts.

Relationship connected with ensuring freedom of conscience and activity of religious organizations in the Republic of Uzbekistan is also regulated by the legislation of the Republic of Karakalpakstan.

If a certain international agreement of the Republic of Uzbekistan lays down rules other than those stipulated in the legislation of the Republic of Uzbekistan on freedom of conscience and religious organizations, the former is applicable.

**Article 3. Right to freedom of conscience**

Right of conscience - is guaranteed constitutional right of citizens either to practice any religion or do not practice any.

Any compulsion of citizen, when determining his attitude to religion, practicing or not practicing religion, participation or not participation in divine services and devotions and receipt of religious education is not permitted.

Involvement of persons to be under age into religious organizations, as well as their teaching religion contrary to their will, their parents' or their guardians' will is banned.

Freedom to practice a religion or other convictions is liable only to those restrictions that are necessary to ensure national security, public order, life, health, morals, rights and liberties of other citizens.

Foreign and stateless citizens enjoy the right to freedom of conscience and religion on a par with citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan. They bear responsibility established by the Law for violation of the legislation on freedom of conscience and religious organizations.

#### **Article 4. Equality of rights of citizens irrespective of their attitude toward religion**

Citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan, irrespective of their attitude toward religion, are equal before law. It is not permitted to specify the citizen's attitude toward religion in official documents. Any limitation of rights and establishment of direct or indirect privileges of citizens depending on their attitude toward religion, incitement of enmity and hatred or offence of the citizens' feelings in connection with their religious or atheistic convictions, such as outrage of honorable religious objects, entail responsibility established by the law.

No one may evade performance of duties established by the legislation according to motives of one's religious convictions. Replacement of performance of one duty for another one according to motives of religious convictions is permitted only in cases stipulated by the legislation.

#### **Article 5. Separation of religion and state**

Religion in the Republic of Uzbekistan is separated from the state. The establishment of any privileges or restrictions of one religion with regard to others is not permitted.

The state assists in establishment of mutual tolerance and respect between citizens either practicing different religions or not practicing any, between religious organizations of different religions; the state does not permit religious and other fanaticism and extremism, as well as actions aimed at opposition and aggravation of relationship, incitement of enmity between different confessions.

The state supports peace and accord between religious confessions. Actions aimed at conversion of believers of one confessions into another ones (proselytism), as well as any other missionary activity is banned. Persons violating this rule, bear responsibility established by the legislation.

The state does not entrust religious organizations with fulfillment of any state functions; it does not interfere into their activity if such activity is not at variance with the legislation. Religious organizations do not fulfil state functions. The state does not finance activity of religious organizations and activity associated with propaganda of atheism.

The creation and activity of political party and social movement on the basis of religion in the Republic of Uzbekistan, as well as creation of affiliates and branches of religious parties outside the Republic is banned.

Religious organizations shall comply with requirements of the legislation currently in effect. It is not permitted to use religion for the purpose of anti-state and anti-constitutional propaganda, incitement of enmity, hatred, international discord, breach of moral principles and civil accord, distribution of slanderous insinuation destabilizing situation, spreading panic among population and taking other actions against the state, society and person. Activity of religious organizations, movements, sects and other organizations promoting terrorism, narcotic business and organized crime, as well as activity of organizations pursuing other selfish ends, is banned.

Any attempts to put pressure upon the agencies of State power and administration, officials, as well as illegal religious activity are suppressed by law.

## **Article 6. Authorities of State and self-administration agencies of citizens in relationship with religious organizations**

The Committee for Religious Affairs operating at the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan is entrusted with coordination of relationship of State agencies with religious organizations and execution of control over implementation of legislation on freedom of conscience and religious organizations. Legal status of the Committee is defined by the Regulations approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

The Council of Ministers of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, khokimiyats of provinces, regions and towns, as well as self-government agencies of the citizens in relevant territory are responsible for observation of the legislation on freedom of conscience and religious organizations under law.

## **Article 7. The system of education and religion**

The system of education in the Republic of Uzbekistan is separated from religion. Inclusion of religious disciplines into curriculum of educational system is banned.

The right to secular education is granted to citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan irrespective of their attitude toward religion.

## **Article 8. Religious organizations**

Religious organizations are recognized to be voluntary associations of citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan, established for the purpose of joint practicing of religion, execution of divine service, devotions and rituals (such as religious societies, religious educational institutions, mosques, churches, synagogues, cloisters, etc.).

Religious organization is created on initiative of not less than one hundred citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan under eighteen years old domiciling in the Republic of Uzbekistan.

With a view to coordinate activity of religious organizations of relevant confessions, their central managerial bodies may be created throughout the Republic of Uzbekistan (hereinafter referred to as the central managerial bodies).

The central managerial body is created by constituent meeting (conference) of representatives of registered religious organizations of relevant confession functioning in not less than eight territorial regions of the Republic of Uzbekistan (province, the city of Tashkent, the Republic of Karakalpakstan).

Religious organizations acquire status of a legal entity and may carry out their activity only after their registration with the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Uzbekistan or its local agencies in keeping with the procedure established by the legislation.

Citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan having relevant religious education may be heads of religious organizations. Nominee candidates of heads of religious organizations who are not citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan shall be coordinated with the Committee for Religious Affairs operating at the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

#### **Article 9. Religious educational institutions**

The central managerial bodies of religious organizations are entitled to create religious educational institutions to train priests and necessary religious personnel. Religious educational institutions acquire the right to their activity only after their registration with the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the issue of relevant license to them.

Citizens leaved secondary school may enter religious institutions of high education or colleges in accordance with Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On education".

Citizens teaching religious disciplines at religious educational institutions shall have religious education and carry out their activity by permission of the relevant central managerial body. Teaching religious dogma in private form is banned.

#### **Article 10. Charter of religious organization**

The charter of religious organization shall include the following information:

name, kind of religious organization, its location and religion;

aims, tasks and main lines of activity;

procedure for formation and termination of activity;

structure and managerial bodies;

sources of formation of funds and property relationship both inside and outside the organization;

procedure for the introduction of amendments and supplements into its charter;

other information concerning the given religious organization.

Charters of religious organizations managed by the central bodies shall be coordinated with such managerial bodies.

#### **Article 11. Registration of religious organizations**

The central managerial bodies of religious organizations are registered with the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Uzbekistan, while managerial bodies of other religious organizations are registered with the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, justice departments of regions and the city of Tashkent respectively as agreed with the Committee for Religious Affairs operating at the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

To register religious organization, the following documents should be presented:

application signed by citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan, not less than 100 in number, on whose initiative the given religious organization is created;

charter of religious organization;

protocol of meeting of founding members;

document confirming location of religious organization being created;

document giving proof of payment of a registration fee.

To register the central managerial body of religious organizations, the following documents are to be submitted:

application, signed by a chairman and a secretary of meeting (conference) of founding members;

charter of the central managerial body of religious

organizations;

protocol of meeting (conference) of founding members;  
documents confirming authorities of the founders;  
document confirming location of managerial body;  
document confirming payment of a registration fee.

Application for registration of religious organizations and their central managerial bodies are considered within a month from the date such application has been filed.

Justice agencies have the right to inquiry additional information and receive expert conclusion of the relevant agencies. In this case, a decision is taken within three months from the date an appropriate application for registration has been filed.

Amendments and supplements introduced to the charter of religious organization shall be registered in keeping with the same procedure and within the same terms established for registration of religious organization.

Evasion of heads of religious organizations of registrations of the organization's charter with State agencies entails responsibility under Law.

The agency registered religious organization, executes control over compliance of activity of religious organizations with their charters.

Officials permitted activity of not registered religious organizations are responsible under Law.

#### **Article 12. Refusal of registration of religious organization**

In case where provisions of the charter and other documents are at variance with the present Law or other legislative acts of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the registration of such religious organization may be refused.

Decision on refusal of request to register religious organization is forwarded to applicants in writing with indication of grounds for refusal. Founders of religious organization are entitled to apply to the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Uzbekistan and its local agencies repeatedly to register a charter, provided that the charter is in accordance with the legislation.

Refusal of request to register religious organization or violation of requirements of the present Law by justice agencies may be appealed to a court.

#### **Article 13. Termination of activity of religious organization**

Activity of religious organization may be terminated upon its dissolution and in case where it violates the present Law and other legislative acts of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

The agency registered religious organization may take a decision to terminate it. This decision may be appealed to a court.

#### **Article 14. Devotions**

Religious organizations have the right to found and maintain freely accessible places of divine services or devotions, as well as maintain places of pilgrimage.

Divine services and devotions are held at places of location of

religious organizations in religious and prayer buildings and in their territories, at places of pilgrimage and cemeteries, and in case of ritual necessity - in the citizens' houses as they wish.

Divine services and devotions are held at hospitals, old people's homes, invalids' houses and at places of imprisonment before trial and serving punishment according to request of their inhabitants.

Public divine services and devotions outside religious and prayer buildings are held in keeping with the procedure established by the legislation of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Appearance of the citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan at public places wearing religious dress is not permitted (with the exception of ministers of religion).

Religious organizations are not entitled to collect charge from believers forcedly and tax them, as well as apply measures hurting person's honor and dignity.

#### **Article 15. Property of religious organizations**

Property of religious organizations may include the following: edifices, constructions, religious articles, production, social and charitable establishments, financial resources, other property required to carry out their activity purchased or created by them at the expense of their own funds, conferred (bequeathed) them as a gift by citizens and public associations or transferred by the state, as well as that property located abroad or bought on other grounds stipulated by the legislation.

Right of property of religious organizations is protected by the law.

#### **Article 16. Use of state-owned property**

Religious organizations are entitled to use edifices and property for their own needs granted to them by the State agencies on a contractual basis.

The objects and articles, considered to be historical and cultural monuments, may be transferred to religious organizations to be used by them, in keeping with the legislation.

Allotment of land for religious organizations and construction of religious buildings is executed in keeping with the established procedure by permission of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, khokimiyats of regions and the city of Tashkent respectively and the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

#### **Article 17. Production economic activity**

The central managerial bodies of religious organizations, are entitled, based on charter aims, to set up publishing houses, production, restoration, construction, agricultural and other enterprises, as well as charitable establishments (orphan's homes and hospitals) in keeping with the legislation of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

**Article 18. Disposal of property of religious organizations terminated their activity**

Religious organizations terminated their activity, shall return property, granted for their use, to the former owner.

Upon termination of activity of religious organizations, possession of property being in their ownership, is carried out in accordance with their charters and legislation. A list of religious property to which a claim can not be made according to the creditors' complaints, is established by the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan on the grounds of notions of religious organizations.

If there are no legal successors, the property is transferred into state ownership.

**Article 19. Religious literature and articles used for religious purposes**

The central managerial bodies of religious organizations are entitled to produce, export, import and distribute articles used for religious purposes, religious literature and other information religious materials in keeping with the procedure established by the legislation of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Religious literature published abroad is delivered and sold in the Republic only after preliminary examination of its contents in keeping with the procedure established by the legislation.

The central managerial bodies of religious organizations have and exclusive right to issue and distribute religious articles provided an appropriate license is available.

Production, storing and distribution of publications, cine-, photo-, audio-, video-production and other materials containing ideas of religious extremism and separatism entail responsibility under the law.

**Article 20. Charitable activity of religious organizations**

Religious organizations have the right to carry out charitable activity and mercy.

**Article 21. Labor legal relationship within religious organizations**

The labor legislation of the Republic of Uzbekistan is applicable to citizens working at religious organizations under labor agreements (contracts).

**Article 22. International relations of religious organizations**

Religious organizations have the right to establish and maintain international relations for the purpose of pilgrimage or participation in other religious events.

**Article 23. Responsibility born for violation of legislation on freedom of conscience and religious organizations**

Officials, ministers of religion and persons identified as having violated the legislation on freedom of conscience and religious organizations shoulder responsibility in accordance with the legislation of the Republic of Uzbekistan.